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Posted on Tue, Apr. 16, 2002

Duluth News Tribune

Ship grounding blocks Soo Locks shipping channel

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. -- A 740-foot freighter ran aground Monday on the St. Marys River, the link between Lake Superior and Lake Huron, forcing officials to shut down the Soo Locks shipping channel.

The Algowood, a Canadian ship that left the Twin Ports around 10 a.m. Saturday, ran aground near Sugar Island about 9:15 a.m., shortly after the locks had reopened following a temporary closure because of heavy fog.

The impact tore open the hull and the ship took on water, but no pollution was released, the U.S. Coast Guard said.

The cause of the wreck remains under investigation, said Coast Guard Assistant Operations Officer Ron Kooper, based in Sault Ste. Marie.

The damaged ship blocked the St. Marys River, preventing others from passing.

By midafternoon, 10 ships were lined up on the river.

There was no immediate word on how long repairs would take or when the locks, which raise and lower ships between the two lakes, would reopen.

Strong currents prevented commercial divers from completing an examination of Algowood's hull for damage.

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A commercial survey crew will board the ship, owned by Algoma Central Shipping, today to search for damage. The Web site Boatnerd.com, edited by Neil Schultheiss, owner of Troy, Mich.,-based Great Lakes & Seaway Shipping, posted photographs of the Algowood listing to the port side.

News Tribune staff writer Melanie Evans contributed to this report.

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